

**Libby Community Advisory Group
Meeting Summary
June 8, 2000**

Introductions

Gerald Mueller and Libby Community Advisory Group (CAG) members present introduced themselves. A list of the members in attendance is attached below as Appendix 1.

Agenda

Mr. Mueller reviewed an agenda for this meeting including the following topics:

- May 25, 2000 Meeting Summary Correction
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Report
- Report from Community Medical Trust Steering Committee
- Lincoln County & W.R. Grace Responses to CAG Member Questions
- Public Comment Period
- Next Steps - Meeting Date and Agenda

May 25, 2000 Meeting Summary Correction

Clinton Maynard asked that a copy of his statement to the CAG at the May 25 meeting be attached to this summary to correct the May 25 meeting summary. Gayla Benefield asked that Carrie Dedrick be listed as her alternate.

EPA ReportWendy Thomi

Diana Hammer will be in Libby next week to conduct interviews of people whose homes have been sampled. The purpose of the interviews is to collect information to allow EPA to correlate sampling results with potential exposure scenarios. EPA Region 8 Acting Administrator Rebecca Hammer will also visit Libby on June 14 and 15 and would like to arrange meetings with local elected officials, CAG members, and hospital officials. EPA's Jan Shubert and Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's (ATSDR's) Pam Tucker will visit Libby beginning June 13 to assess the community's mental health needs. Ms. Shubert and Tucker will hold a one hour meeting with members of the CAG on Thursday, June 15. Patrick Young of ATSDR reported that these women will also hold workshops for Libby area health professionals addressing response to stress caused by living near hazardous waste sites. The workshops at the Pioneer Park (Jay Cees' Club House) on June 20 from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m., on June 21 from 1:00 to 5:30 p.m. and 6:30 to 9:30 p.m., and on June 22 also from 1:00 to 5:30 p.m. and 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Paul Peronard

Site Cleanups - The site cleanups are beginning slowly. Surveys of the sites are being conducted. Next week the Parkers will be moved to an uncontaminated location. Scoping of a disposal location for contaminated soils and materials at the mine is underway. EPA is working with landowners regarding access issues. Next week a mobile laboratory containing an electron microscope and a polarized light microscope will arrive. W.R. Grace has notified EPA that it will comply with the cleanup order for the export site and has submitted a work plan to do so. EPA is reviewing the plan and will submit comments to W.R. Grace which will then resubmit the plan to EPA for approval. All documents related to the cleanup are available at the EPA Information Center in Libby.

Medical Screening - Telephone contacts regarding the medical screening are continuing. As of June 3, 1,359 households containing 1,884 eligible people have been called. Some 1,607 people have made appointments for screening, 215 have declined to do so, and decisions by 36 are pending. About 742 Libby households remain to be contacted. Projections of the participation rate to date indicate that 3,000 to 3,500 people will participate in the screening. Construction of facilities for the screening are on schedule, and screening will begin on June 26. Patrick Young announced that his agency, ATSDR, has prepared public service announcements on the availability of the medical screening and will also be meeting with Libby area civic groups to publicize the screening.

CAG Member Question - People calling the 800 number are being told that they will be called back. Some of the call backs have resulted in telephone tag which is inconvenient for Libby people. Why can't people who call in be scheduled without the need for return calls?

Answer - EPA believes this request is reasonable. EPA will, therefore, discuss this with ATSDR to see if there is a way to eliminate the need for the return calls.

As a result of Senator Baucus' meeting in Libby, EPA will phase in funding this fiscal year both for screening former W.R. Grace workers and their families who have left Libby and for cat-scans as a supplement to the medical screening. Funding for both activities will continue during the next fiscal year. Screening of eligible people no longer in the Libby area will begin with the 100 people now living in Elko, Nevada. The protocol for screening eligible people who have left Libby has been submitted to the *Human Review Board* which must approve it before this screening can begin. The cat-scans will be provided to people who are in the high risk group, i.e. former Libby W.R. Grace workers and their families, who have normal chest x-rays but are experiencing chest pain or have abnormal pulmonary function tests. People who have normal chest x-rays and pulmonary function tests and have no other symptoms will be screened on two year intervals. A draft protocol for the supplementary cat-scans and Box pulmonary tests will be issued for public comment.

Mine Site Investigation - Investigation at the mine site is taking place today. Samples are being taken for analysis by the traditional (polarized light microscopy) and new analytical techniques (infrared and scanning electron microscopy). The new techniques will be checked using double blind performance tests. The State of Montana will investigate an area at the mine site known as the "Glory Hole." The Glory Hole is an area that contained an ore vein containing high concentration of vermiculite that was mined by digging a pit. The pit, estimated to be 60 feet deep and 100 feet wide, was filled in 1990, but the type of material used as fill is not known. The State will scrape off the overburden covering the Glory Hole and then drill a well to look for contamination, being careful not to cause ground water contamination. EPA expects that once the tailings and the Glory Hole are addressed that the mine will not pose a significant continuing problem.

Aerial Investigation - During July 15 through August 1 period, an aircraft containing an infrared spectrometer will overfly the Libby area to map the distribution of actinolite and tremolite asbestos deposits. Five flight lines will be flown over the Raintree Road, one over the Kootenai River, and ten over the town of Libby. About 2 1/2 to 3 months will be required to process the data.

Publicity Surrounding Chris Weis' Statement about Mortality of W.R. Grace Workers - Press reports of a presentation given by Chris Weis in Boulder, Colorado have stated that EPA predicted 100% mortality for W.R. Grace workers. In response to these press reports, Mr. Peronard prepared a chronology of what was known about vermiculite and asbestos at Libby. Most of the documents on the chronology are available from the EPA Information Center. Mr. Peronard passed out this

chronology, entitled "Libby Vermiculite/Asbestos Time Line," to the CAG and others in attendance at this meeting. Mr. Peronard stated that EPA will be requesting similar information from W.R. Grace to better understand the progression of disease in Libby, including how people get sick and the levels of asbestos that causes disease. John Constan of the Montana Department of Environmental Quality volunteered to do a similar analysis from the State's perspective, i.e. to find out what the State knew about the conditions at Libby over time and the hazard those conditions presented to W.R. Grace workers and the people of Libby.

Mr. Peronard stated that Mr. Weis did not say that based on past reports that EPA expected 100% mortality in W.R. Grace workers. Reports published in scientific journals predicted that certain W.R. Grace job categories were expected to have high levels of mortality. Some studies recommended follow-up work that was not done. EPA intends to ask earlier report authors to follow-up on their work to better understand disease progression.

Mr. Peronard also announced that from now on comments about policy decisions related to Libby vermiculite and asbestos will be made only by EPA Washington DC headquarters. Questions regarding the policy decisions should be addressed to John Melone, Director of the Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxic Substances, telephone number (202)260-1866, or the Office of Media Relations, telephone number (202)564-4355.

CAG Request - The CAG asked Mr. Peronard to convey to Mr. Melone a request that he make a statement to the CAG regarding what EPA knew and the policy decisions it has made regarding Libby and asbestos. Mr. Peronard agreed to forward this request.

CAG Discussion - Some CAG members argued that it is important to identify who in EPA knew what, when, and what they did about the asbestos problem in Libby so that officials can be held accountable. Others argued that the CAG should focus not on the past but on ensuring that the asbestos contamination is cleaned up and that people needing medical treatment get it.

Question from CAG Member - When will the results of the home sampling conducted in March and April be available?

Answer: Letters containing the results will be mailed to sampling participants during the next two weeks. A public meeting on the results will follow.

Report from the Community Medical Trust Steering Committee

Kerry Beasley reported on behalf of the steering committee created by the CAG to work on the development of a trust proposal. Ms. Beasley stated that due to problems with communications, the Billings law firm initially identified to provide legal work on the proposal has been dropped. On June 29 and 30, two additional firms will be interviewed.

Question from CAG Member - Is funding available for the trust?

Answer: St. John's Hospital has committed \$5,000 to the initiation of the trust and the CAG has written to EPA requesting funds for this purpose. The trust must be defined before soliciting funds to put in it.

Question from CAG Member - Has EPA responded to our request for funding to explore the trust formation?

Answer: Not yet.

Lincoln County & W.R. Grace Responses to CAG Member Questions

Lincoln County Environmental Health Department Response - Ron Anderson read the response to the written question addressed by a CAG member to the Lincoln County Environmental Health Department. The question and response had been previously mailed to CAG members and other interested parties.

Audience Question - Did Mr. Anderson's Department know about the toxic asbestos fibers in the air?

Answer: No. Neither the State Air Quality Bureau nor the County knew that the ambient air should have been sampled for asbestos. Information available indicated that the problem was occupational in nature.

Question from CAG Member - Why should we trust County Environmental Health Department?

Answer: While the County didn't know in the past about the nature and significance of the asbestos problem, it does now. The County must develop a long-term monitoring capability consistent with what the community needs and expects to follow on the present efforts of both EPA and ATSDR. While the federal agencies will continue to provide technical assistance after their present work is completed, the lead on monitoring will shift to the County.

W.R. Grace Responses - Because the W.R. Grace spokesperson was not in attendance, the W.R. Grace responses will be deferred until the next meeting.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 22, 2000 from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Ponderosa Room of the Libby City Hall. The June 22 agenda will include a presentation by the EPA and ATSDR stress response team, Jan Schubert and Pam Tucker and the W.R. Grace written responses to CAG questions.

Appendix 1

CAG Member Attendance List

June 8, 2000

Name	Group/Organization Represented
Leroy Thom	Former Grace union employee and local businessman
Gayla Benefield	LCAVRO
John Constan	DEQ
Mayor Tony Berget	City of Libby
Commissioner Rita Windom	Lincoln County
Norita Skramstad	Asbestos Victims
Wendy Thomi	EPA Community Involvement
David F. Latham	The Montanian
Carol Ray	Montana Covering Kids
Kenneth Hayes	Lincoln County Council on Aging (Alternate for Wilbur Wilson)
Ron Anderson	Lincoln County
Cyrus Lee	Kootenai Valley Headstart
Mike Switzer	Asbestos Victim
Grayson Casey	Kootenai Realty
Paul Peronard	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) On-Scene Coordinator
Sandy Wagner	Lincoln County
Kerry Beasley	St. Johns Lutheran Hospital
Brad Black	Lincoln County Health Officer
Wilbur Wilson	Lincoln County Council on Aging